

Parke County's Covered Bridge Festival And Historic Billie Creek Village

Next Festival October 10-19, 1975



Parke County, with its 36 covered bridges, is the No. 1 county in the United States in number of covered bridges. It is located in West Central Indiana, the Wabash River forming its western boundary. The U.S. Highways 36 and 41 intersect in Rockville, the county seat with 3,000 population. The county is comparatively small in area and population—just a typical Midwestern agricultural county with very little industry.

That this little old Parke County, down in Indiana, should now have more covered Bridges than any county in the U.S. naturally brings up the question, "How come?" There are several reasons.

First, the terrain is generally rolling and the county is laced with many creeks and streams, the largest being Big Raccoon Creek, Sugar Creek and Little Raccoon Creek. There was and is an abundance of hardwood timber and in the early days wood was cheaper than iron. There were a few iron bridges built here, but now concrete has replaced both wood and iron in new bridges.

Our present 36 covered bridges were built between the years 1856 and 1921 and in those years two of the most famous builders of covered bridges—J. J. Daniels and J. A. Britton—lived in Rockville. (The two oldest bridges, both built in 1856, are still in use carrying traffic.)

The main reason, however, we are No. 1 is our program of preserving our covered bridges. Although we originally built 52, many other counties had more, but they have lost theirs. Since 1957, when we held our first Covered Bridge Festival, we have lost only three—one by arson and two by flood. With the cooperation of our county commissioners, when a covered bridge has to be replaced with a concrete structure, a new right of way is purchased and the old bridge left standing in place. In 1961, we had to move two of our covered bridges to new locations and in 1970, one—all at a total cost of over \$16,000. In the past few years almost \$300,000 of Parke County tax money has been spent on the maintenance of our covered bridges. Seven of our covered bridges are not in use and four of them are maintained from funds derived from the Covered Bridge Festival and Maple Fair.

The idea of holding a Covered Bridge Festival was triggered by a former resident of Parke County, who wrote the editor of one of the local newspapers saying she could not understand why we did not publicize the fact we had so many lovely old covered bridges and beautiful scenery. A small committee of public spirited citizens began a study of the problem and one of them suggested holding a festival in October when our hardwood trees were in a blaze of color.

It was a bold venture and many of our local citizens scoffed at the idea: "Who will come here just to see these old covered bridges? They should all be torn down and replaced with modern concrete bridges." But the dates were set, \$800 was raised for expenses and the first Covered Bridge Festival was held on three beautiful days of an October week end. With good publicity, especially by the Chicago Tribune, many people came. When it was over, we still had our \$800 and decided to hold it on two week ends the next year.

That was 18 years ago and the activities have been expanded until now everything is going on all 10 days and attendance has reached over 300,000 and the Festival is rated in the top 10 tourist attractions in the U. S. by

the Department of Interior.

That little committee planned well, for the basic plan has never been changed—only new features were added year by year as the Festival grew. Our Festival would be different. It would be historical and educational. It would be free of commercialism. It would not be just a homecoming with a parade, high school band, a queen, carnival, rides, lottery, etc.

Members of that small committee who planned and conducted the first Covered Bridge Festival were strictly amateurs and although they are now organized as Parke County, Inc., they are still amateurs and the program is run by and for Parke County citizens.

Farmers Market

Rockville has a town square with the courthouse in the center. This is headquarters for the Covered Bridge Festival. A huge promenade tent is erected on the north side and half of the east and west sides of the courthouse yard. The Farmers Market is in the tent where you will find a bewildering profusion of the fruit of Parke County's autumn from the fields, gardens and woods piled, strung and heaped—gourds, pumpkins, melons, bittersweet, popcorn, persimmons, pawpaws, squaw corn, etc. Rugs, aprons, linens, sweaters, sunbonnets, nose warmers and dozens of other items of domestic artistry abound.

Besides the Farmers Market, local citizens display the products of their own skills and farms in booths featuring maple products, honey, sorghum, crackerjack, domestic articles and crafts, and some of the articles found in the Farmers Market.

Early Activities

Another tradition of the Festival is the Early Activities. Members of local organizations,

suitably costumed, serve a wide variety of delicious foods. Their stands are crude shacks located in the west and south areas of the courthouse yard. At the "Beans on Wash Day" stand are several huge black kettles in which beans and ham are simmering. Served with fresh home baked cornbread, it makes a delicious meal. Other foods served in the Early Activities include persimmon and vanilla ice cream, whole hog sausage, fried apple pies, "riz" crullers, cinnamon delights, smoked cured hams and bacon, corn on the cob and gingerbread. At another stand hot biscuits are served right out of the oven.

Besides all this food, a pancake, sausage and maple sirup breakfast is served at the 4-H Fairgrounds on both Sunday mornings. Members of the Rotary Club prepare the food and ladies of the D.A.R. do the serving. On both Saturdays and Sundays the Rosedale American Legion serves a barbecued chicken dinner. Their charcoal grill is a half block long. Then several other organizations serve regular meals in various locations.

Bus Tours On Four Routes

When visitors register they receive a map of the county showing the location of the covered bridges and the four routes marked with metal signs. A guide is on each bus who gives a running commentary of the bridges, scenery and landmarks. Or guests may drive their own cars. No commercial busses are allowed on the covered bridges.

Art Department

In the corridors of the courthouse the members of the Covered Bridge Art Association display their paintings and they are for sale. In the 18-year history of the Covered Bridge Festival many of our local citizens have discovered an art they never knew they had and now the

quality of their work equals and some say surpasses that of the famous Brown County artists in Southern Indiana.

Entertainment

On both Friday nights and Monday night Leon Lawrence of Chicago gives a color slide lecture on Parke County's covered bridges and scenery titled "It's Yesterday Again In Parke County." On the other evenings of the Festival, the Parke Players stage a melodrama and invite the audience to boo and hiss the villain and cheer the hero. Performances have included "Ten Nights In A Bar Room", "Dirty Work At The Crossroads" and this year it was "Because Their Hearts Were Pure." All these performances are in the Ritz Theatre in Rockville.

Other Festival Features

Among other features (new ones are added almost every year) are the only scare crow contest in the world so far as we know. This is county wide and guests vote for the winners. In the courthouse yard is the Senior Citizens' Have-A-Rest tent. A hymn-sing is held in the courthouse yard early on Sunday mornings. A Photograph Contest and Exhibit is held each year and prizes awarded. Shuttle bus service is run from headquarters to the 4-H Fairgrounds and Billie Creek Village. With three state parks the 4-H Fairgrounds, city parks and private parks there are plenty of camp ground facilities. There are three marked bikeway routes in Parke County. An Antique Show and Sale is held at the 4-H Fairgrounds. The Historical Society has a museum in Rockville. Four towns in Parke County—Montezuma, Mecca, Rosedale and Bridgeton—hold their own Festivals simultaneously (with the main one in Rockville,) to truly make this a county-wide celebration of the covered bridges.

Billie Creek Village

By 1972, the Covered Bridge Festival was in real trouble. The attendance had grown so large that the facilities around the courthouse in Rockville had gone beyond the "saturation point." This was true in spite of the fact that thousands more were out on the four covered bridge routes and in the four other towns of the county. So, when Billie Creek Village was opened that year it can be truly said that it made it possible for the Covered Bridge Festival to keep on growing. Many of the craft demonstrations were moved from the courthouse square to the village which

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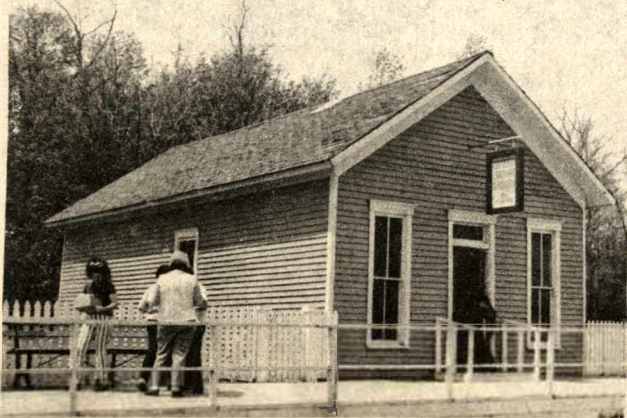


Due to changes in highways and routes chosen, the following may not be exact, but are reasonably accurate distances from Rockville:

Town	Miles
Chicago	150
Cincinnati	175
Bloomington, Ind.	72
Danville, Ill.	48
Evansville	132
Ft. Wayne	164
Indianapolis	55
Louisville	155
St. Louis	187
Terre Haute	24
Urbana-Champaign	82



BILLIE CREEK GENERAL STORE. This store building was built in Annapolis in Parke County, probably between 1850 and 1860 when that community was thriving. Joseph "Uncle Joe" Cannon, speaker of the United States House of Representatives who completed 23 terms in the House, spent his youth in Annapolis and is believed to have worked in this store. With the decline of Annapolis, the building was moved 1½ miles south to Bloomingdale where it served several owners before being moved 7 miles to the Village in 1968. The 33 by 45 foot building rests on 10 by 10 inch hand hewn poplar sills which are carried by the masonry piers in the earth. The front has a remarkable large glassed area and the interior columns are of architectural interest as well as a necessity for so large an open floor space. The structure is transitional, lying between the early heavy timber frame and the light wood frame of later times. Interior walls and ceilings are paneled with one-inch poplar boards. A large upstairs room, full length of the building, provided office space storage and living quarters.



COVERED BRIDGE COURIER. The Courier, an authentic 1913 weekly newspaper office, was dedicated in 1971. The newspaper and print shop are housed in the building formerly occupied by the Bellmore Telephone Company and was moved six miles to the Village site and has been restored. Most of the equipment was used in publishing the weekly Rockville Republican which is now 110 years old and is one of the oldest newspapers in Indiana. Main attraction in the building is the four-page Miehle press which was manufactured in 1899. There is also a job press of about the same era and an early linotype machine. Along with the folder and a wide variety of Civil War era handset type, the building is an authentic reproduction of a country newspaper of the era. Every piece of equipment in the shop is operational and a feature is the printing of a four page newspaper dated 1913 and covering the imaginary people of Billie Creek using the old country weekly style of language and page layout. Typical advertisements of the period were engraved and are reproduced in the newspaper.



BROOM SHOP. The Village Broom Shop is now located in an old smoke house that originally stood on the Glasson farm west of town. It was moved to the Village in 1969. The Broom Shop will later be moved to a more adequate quarters as soon as funds permit bringing another building into the Village. The broom making equipment is treadle operated and gives the visitor an authentic look at the operation of a light industry in the 1900 era.

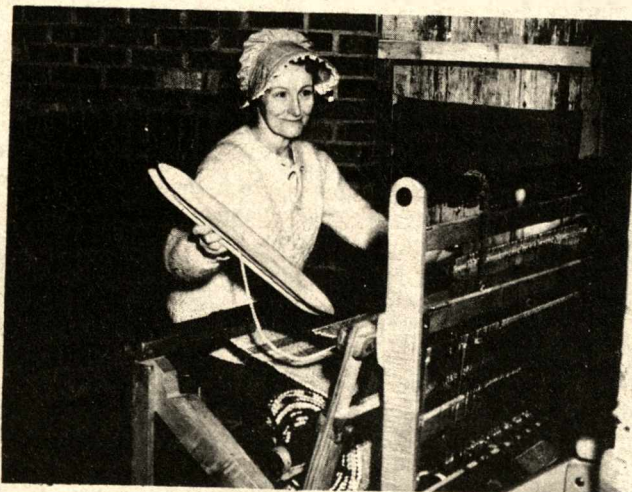
BLACKSMITH SHOP. A new addition to our village this year. Unable to locate an authentic 1900 era building, we constructed this shop in the typical architectural style of the period.

For Further Information, Write
Tourist Center
Rockville, Indiana 47872

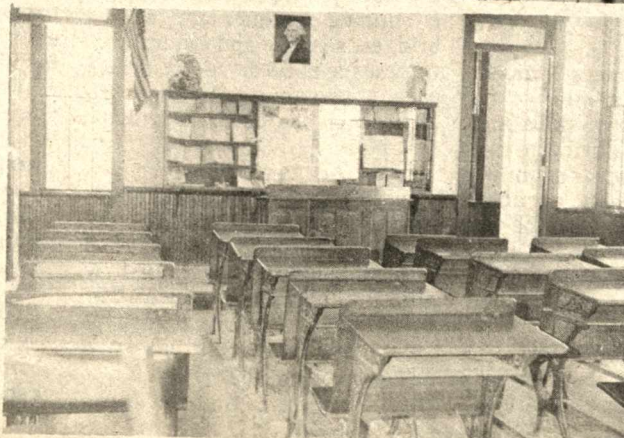


BIRDS EYE VIEW
OF
BILLIE CREEK VILLAGE
LOOKING NORTH

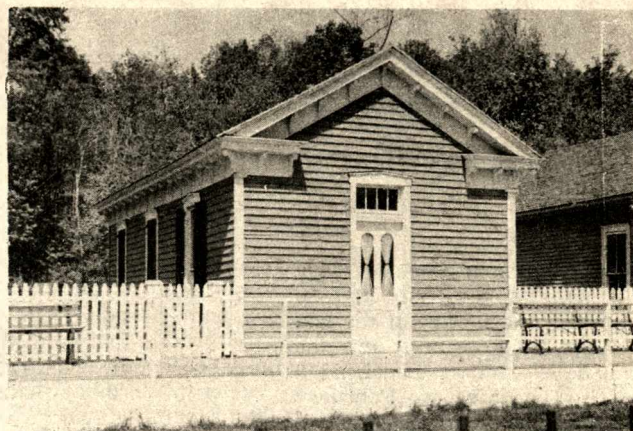
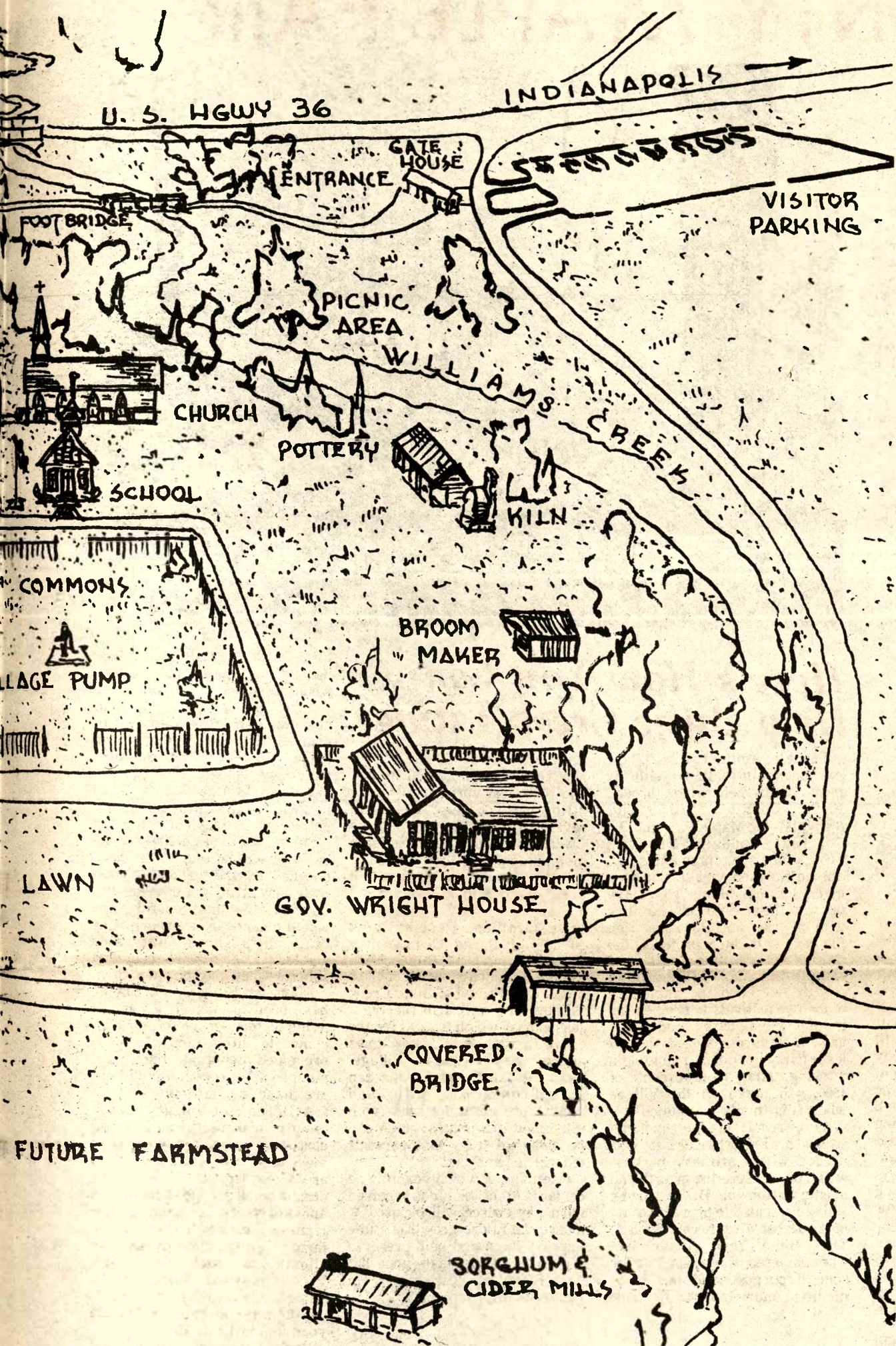
Parke County's Billie Creek Village Where You



WEAVER'S COTTAGE. Called the Beeson-DePlanty house, this 18 by 22 foot log house was built in the 1830's on Roaring Creek in the County's Washington Township. It was later covered with wood siding and divided into four rooms. The William Beeson family owned the house in the early 1900's and the Beesons gave financial assistance toward this restoration. Dale DePlanty gave the house to the village and it was moved approximately ten miles to the site in 1969. The logs are poplar, hand-hewn and shaped with an adz. Window and floor frames were similarly shaped and were primed to the legends with wooden dowels. No nails, spikes, or straps hold the structure together. Gables are sided with poplar boards, the interior paneling is one-inch poplar with beaded edge and the floor is sassafras wood. A tiny stair beside the fireplace serves the upstairs. The yellow clay chinking between the logs is in keeping with early practice and some of the chinking is still intact after 100 years.



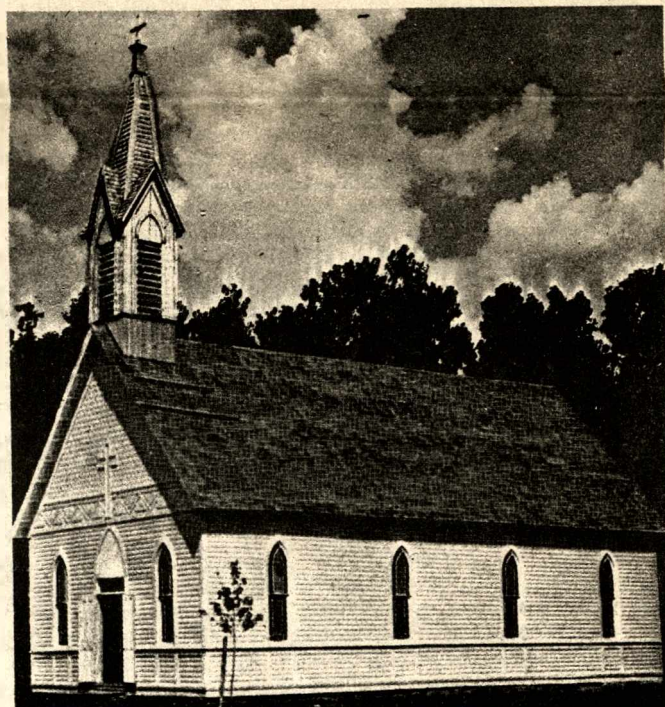
ONE-ROOM SCHOOL. This structure was one of the last one-room school houses built in Parke County and has architectural refinements unknown to older schools, including the belfry, entrance stoop, vestibule and coat storage room. Windows were placed on one side, preferably north, to provide lighting and large blackboard space. A bucket and dipper in the vestibule held drinking water and two outhouses met the sanitary requirements. On winter evenings, the coal fire was banked to last until morning. Grades 1 through 8 were in attendance simultaneously, under one teacher. In 1913, beginning teachers received \$40 to \$45 per month and school lasted from September to late March. Built near Lyford in the summer of 1913, it was used as a school for about 15 years and later became a storage building on the Huxford farm. Construction is light wood frame throughout.



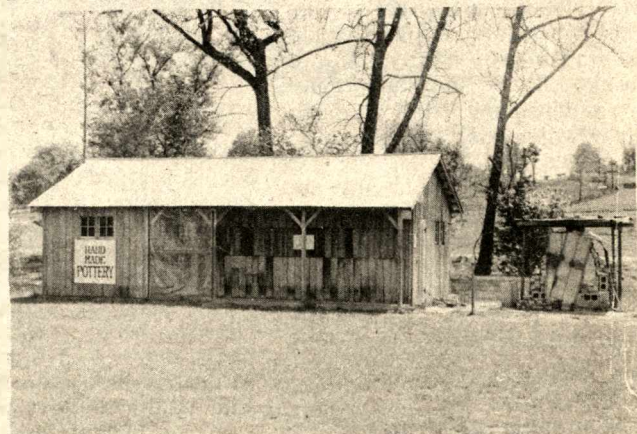
DOCTOR RICE'S OFFICE. Dr. Harrison Rice began practice in this office in Rockville in 1816. It originally sat in downtown Rockville, where the Rockville National Bank drive-in is now located. Some 22 young physicians were trained in this office by Dr. Rice over the many years he practiced medicine in the county. Originally a Greek revival building, it was remodeled around 1865 with Italianate roof brackets and again in 1875 with the longer windows and gas lights. Some years after Dr. Rice gave up his practice, the building was moved to the north end of town and used as a rental. Just prior to its move to the Village it was used as a chicken coop.



CONCESSIONS STAND. The Village concessions stand was built as a cook house to feed the hundreds of hungry patrons who attended the annual Rockville Chautauques. The structure was built in 1911 and this little building accommodated the appetites of such notables as Billy Sunday and William Jennings Bryan who attended the week long Chautauqua events.



ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH. When the Catholic congregation of St. Joseph's in Rockville decided to build a new building, they offered the old structure to Billie Creek Village. It seemed for a time that the historic church would be destroyed because funds to move it to the Village were not immediately available and there was a time limit. In a 12th-hour reprieve the \$10,000 necessary for removal was raised and the church now sits at the Village. It was erected in 1886 and served the congregation for 85 years. It sits on a sandstone foundation and is now in the process of restoration. The front entry way was removed because it was not authentic and any latter day decorations are being replaced. The interior boasts a vintage communion rail and altar plus the pews, statues and other items.



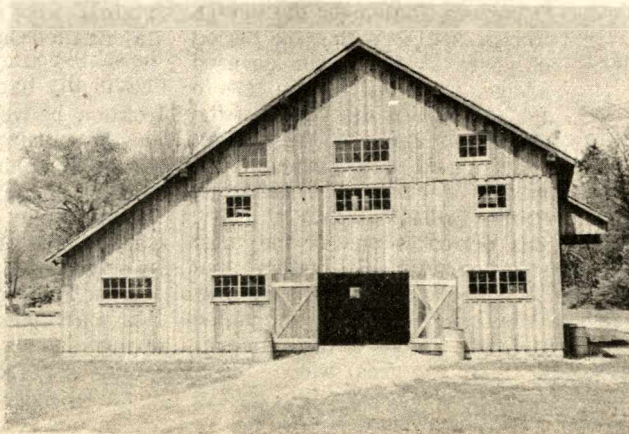
POTTERY SHOP. The building housing the pottery shop is a temporary one and the operation will be relocated into an authentic building of the 1900 era as soon as funds become available. The building was built to house the pottery shop in 1969 with siding from an old house being torn down at the time. Inside the building, visitors will find the potterer plying his trade with a wide range of hand-crafted articles on display.

You Can Take A Lingering Look At Yesterday

GOVERNOR WRIGHT'S HOUSE. The Honorable Joseph A. Wright, 10th governor of Indiana (1849-1857) and United States Senator from 1861 to 1863, lived in this house when it was on Ohio Street in Rockville, half a block from his law office. Later the house was moved to the corner of York and Michigan Streets. Around 1916 it was purchased by the Christian Science Society and used as a meeting house until early in 1969. It was then moved the 1½ miles to its final resting place in the Village. Heavy poplar sills support the floor and wall and the interior finish is plaster over hand-cut wood lathes. The low pitched roof and the entrance door with a transom only and no side-lights, is typical of the houses from 1830 to 1840. The large front room was originally divided into two rooms and a fireplace occupied the north wall. Roofing used has been wood shingles, shales or tin.



LIVERY BARN. A 1971 addition to the Village was an old barn donated to the project. The Village architect estimates the structure was built in the 1870's and it is considered one of the finest specimens of hand workmanship in the area. The barn was located on a farm on the old Bloomingdale road two miles northwest of Rockville. The uprights are all hand-hewn and were held together by wooden dowels. The barn was taken apart and pieces numbered and then reassembled at the Village. Board and batten siding replaced the original deteriorated exterior and a wood shingle roof was added. The barn was still in use until given to the Village by the Warren Crooks family.



PARKE COUNTY MAPLE FAIR

Saturday And Sunday

Feb. 22-23 - March 1-2, 1975

The 1975 Parke County Maple Fair will be held as usual on Saturday and Sunday of the last weekend of February and the same days of the first weekend in March. The dates are February 22-23 and March 1-2. This will be the 12th annual Maple Fair.

A Maple Fair in a winter month in Indiana? Who would be crazy enough to plan such an affair at such a time? The probable answer is: only those crazy people in Parke County who started their Covered Bridge Festival back in 1957. They're crazy like a fox. They figured that after the long winter months sitting staring at TV folks would want to get OUT and GO—and come they did. Like the Covered Bridge Festival, the Maple Fair attendance has grown each year.

The time that maple sugar water runs varies from year to year with the weather, but our old time maple syrup producers tell us that sometime between the above dates the peak of production will be reached. If necessary, the operators hold back the sugar water so the evaporators will be operating on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Seven producers cooperate with Parke County, Inc. in the Maple Fair. There are two routes which start and end at the 4-H Fairgrounds, a mile north of Rockville on US 41. The East Route has three sugar camps and the North Route four. Covered bridges are on both routes. Busses with informed guides leave the Fairgrounds unscheduled, or guests may drive their own cars.

Parke County has both modern and primitive sugar camps. The sugar water is collected in buckets or plastic bags and the evaporators are wood fired or oil fired.

But there is more to do and see at the Maple Fair than to go to the sugar camps. Like the Covered Bridge Festival, it is both entertaining and educational.

Farm Hog Butchering

Parke County farmers raise a lot of hogs, and some of the farmers, mostly old timers, prefer to do their own butchering for home use. This is a farm chore, like many others, which is fast fading out. Guests at the Maple Fair—on Saturday mornings only—can watch this interesting process. The carcasses are brought to the 4-H Fairgrounds and after scalding and scraping the bristles, they are hung and cut up into the pieces that most people are familiar with. This fresh pork will be on sale at the Fairgrounds, along with cured hams and bacon.

Home Folks Market

The Maple Fair has a Home Folks Market similar to the Farmers Market at the Covered Bridge Festival. The feature of this Market, of course, is maple syrup in every size container from cute little jugs to gallon tins. Then there is maple sugar, maple cream, maple candy, maple cookies, maple pies and many more depending on how much sugar water has run before the Fair opens.

But maple products are far from all. There will be piles of needle-work of all kinds, jams and jellies (plenty of corn cob jelly, too), original souvenirs locally made, articles made from wood and corn husks, hand knit nose warmers, honey, eggs—you name it, we'll have it.

Pancake Meal

Beginning at 8:00 A.M. and serving all day, Parke County's famous pancakes will be served with genuine maple syrup and whole hog sausage. Chances are you have never eaten whole hog

sausage, because as the name implies, all the choice cuts, such as hams, tenderloins and loins are ground up with the other meat of the hog. That means it is leaner than ordinary sausage and has a better flavor.

All the above activities are at the 4-H Fairgrounds. As stated before, busses leave here for tours on the two routes and there is free shuttle bus service between the Fairgrounds and Billie Creek Village.

Arts and Crafts

In the Community building at the Fairgrounds the Covered Bridge Art Association members will be busy at their easels with a display of their work on sale. In the years since the first Covered Bridge Festival, our local artists have developed a skill which rivals that of the famous Brown County artists—some say surpasses.

Also in the Community building there will be china painting demonstrations and women busy quilting.

Billie Creek Village

Located a half mile east of Rockville on US 36, Billie Creek Village is a recreation of the period at the turn of the century in crafts, architecture and costumes. From 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. there will be continuous demonstrations of candle dipping, pottery making, broom making, spinning and weaving, rail splitting, blacksmithing and grain grinding.

Sheep Shearing

One of the most popular demonstrations at the Maple Fair is sheep shearing. This is held in the barn at the Village.

Watching sheep shearing has fascinated hundreds of visitors of all ages. Whether it is the swift and efficient job done with modern equipment by Roy Reedy or the slower, but also efficient job done with hand shears or the less antiquated hand-powered clippers, it is always interesting and the sheep themselves are likeable, if occasionally reluctant performers. The ewes always bring their lambs with them and this is a special delight for your children.

Most of the audience do not know they are watching a demonstration of a new and controversial aspect of sheep farming. Shearing before lambing is relatively new. In the past it was believed sheep would suffer from cold weather if sheared so early and they probably would, if inexpertly sheared. Explanations of all the "whys and wherefores," are provided by the Reedys during the shearing.

As one visitor expressed it, "You learn things at the Maple Fair that just aren't in books." Shearing will take place at frequent intervals during both Saturdays and Sundays.

County Historical Society Museum

The Parke County Historical Society is proud to announce that, since opening the Parke County Museum one year ago, over 1700 visitors have signed the guest register.

The historical items and interesting displays make a visit to the Museum well worth while. Also, there is one counter filled with handmade gifts, post cards and souvenir items.

The address is 503 West Ohio (U.S. 36). The public is welcome. There is no admission fee. The hours during the ten days of the Festival will be from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.



Here's How You Can Help Billie Creek Village

To date, Billie Creek Village has been built almost entirely from funds generated through Parke County's two major festivals—the Maple Fair and the Covered Bridge Festival. Some of the structures and small amounts of money have also been given by individuals who have become interested or familiar with the program. But as is often the case with such projects, the financial requirements of completing the Village have greatly exceeded the capability of the two festivals to provide the money needed for continued growth. It is envisioned that at least thirty buildings, including a working farm reminiscent of 1900, will make up the Village when it is finally completed.

As a result of the financial situation, an organization was needed whose primary purpose would be to insure the growth and preservation of Billie Creek Village and also to provide for its operation on a year 'round basis. Thus, Billie Creek Village, Inc. was chartered in January 1972 for such a purpose and has since qualified under Internal Revenue

Service Code 501C3 as a non-profit corporation for educational and historical purposes.

How can you help? There are several ways. Citizens of Parke County may purchase corporate memberships for \$5 per year. The membership entitles them to vote in the yearly Annual Meeting and a season pass to the Village for their families. People living outside of Parke County may become Friends of Billie Creek Village for a contribution of \$5 or more. As a Friend of Billie Creek Village, they will also receive a season pass which is good for the entire family for as many times as they wish to visit the Village. Lastly, Billie Creek Village can accept donations, gifts and charitable contributions from interested individuals which can be deducted from that person's federal income tax.

One thing of which you may be certain: All of the funds received from any source will be used to insure the future growth of Billie Creek Village and help preserve a glimpse of the past—gone but not forgotten—especially in Parke County, Indiana.

Festival And Village

(Continued from front page)

allowed them to expand in number and volume.

One of the long range plans of the committee that held the first Covered Bridge Festival was to get our tourist promotion program working on a year-round basis. By 1964 we realized that the Covered Bridge Festival in October and the Maple Fair in February and March were not enough. Having accumulated a surplus of funds, a 75-acre tract which includes the Billie Creek covered bridge, built in 1895, was purchased.

The era chosen for the village to represent is within the period of years in which our covered bridges were built—from 1856 to 1921. We call it the "Turn of the Century." Because the stream Billie Creek runs through the village we naturally called it "Billie Creek Village." Actually, this period is one of the most significant in all history, but because it was during peacetime, little serious attention is granted it. History tends to fall into eras according to great wars.

The time chosen might also be

termed the "Good Old Days," but this, of course, depends on who uses that term. Right now it is pretty hard to imagine associating moon walks and rock and roll as the "Good Old Days." Be that as it may, at about the time of the first moon walk, Parke County took a firm step backwards and began salvaging old buildings and moving them to the village.

In the centerfold of this leaflet is a map with pictures and descriptions of the buildings now at the village, where the numerous crafts demonstrations are in operation. Serious effort is also put forth to maintain the architecture of the village authentic with the period.

The site of the village is of interest, lying between the original Pike's Peak Highway (later called Ocean to Ocean) and the same route's newer road bed prosaically named U.S. 36. This location, between the old and the new, symbolizes the idea behind the village. During the few years we call "Turn of the Century," the larger part of the entire world was facing a complete change in its economy, its manners and its mores. Those new fangled horseless carriages were going to change not only the economy, but family life, education facilities and even church attendance. The

towns with telephone exchanges would bring more change and so would the wires that would carry electric power to farms and remote hamlets. People, of course, did not realize their position in history. For the most part they thought the ultimate had been attained. They were neither the first nor the last to enjoy this complacent notion.

Small town residents of the early 1900s would have been shocked by the suggestion that their easy going way of living was doomed; that the general store would disappear, along with the blacksmith shops and livery stables. Even their well run schools would soon be out of date.

Plans for Billie Creek Village have been to make it a form of living history—a sort of museum come to life. Limited funds prevented doing all the things planned all at once, but additions are made all the time.

At Billie Creek Village the loom is in actual use, weaving rag carpeting that was still popular in the early 20th century in rural areas. Pottery is being made, corn is being ground, a few sheep and goats are on hand, a fine team of horses is harnessed to a farm wagon and ducks are allowed to hatch their eggs. Visitors may loaf in front of the general store and learn how to whittle, or you can just dangle your feet in Billie Creek.

Parke County claims no world leaders and has no famous battlefields to glorify its countryside. The fact is, more people had forefathers who made their own furniture and fed their own livestock than those whose ancestors were heroes. Billie Creek Village is planned to show how ordinary people conducted their day-to-day lives at a time when work was still regarded as a necessity and also a dignity. Hoosiers do not indulge in ancestor worship, but they are learning a new admiration and respect for their resourceful forebearers.

Billie Creek Village is intended as an experience in the perspective of progress, a reminder that progress is a relative term. Nothing is primitive in the Village because at the turn of the century everything was modern and up-to-date. With good gravel roads and stout covered bridges, travel was easy around home and weren't there trains going all over the country for extended trips? While some people still used coal oil lamps, electric lights were coming into vogue and most folks had ice in the summer.

From many visitors come the questions and suggestions that continue to guide the growth of this project which gets larger, and inevitably, older each year.